

8 February 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Coping with the Intelligence Information
Handling Problem

1. There currently exists within the Intelligence Community a melange of concepts, proposals and uncoordinated actions concerning various aspects of the problem of intelligence information handling -- the dissemination and display of collected and processed data -- which converge into a very major, general issue calling for immediate action.

2. Currently involved in this situation are:

- At least ten programs are developing separate electronic CRT display systems, involving different sensor systems and reporting at varying security levels. No overall coordination plan exists.
- Efforts to improve or replace COINS.
- Efforts to improve warning and crisis intelligence support systems.
- Efforts to improve the national-tactical intelligence interface, which will have to interrelate with the worldwide information handling systems of the military command and control system.

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- Study activities to define the impact on users of upcoming major collection system sensor inputs, and to identify user needs and operating procedures as they affect the layout of communication nets and terminal equipment for users.
- Problems of dissemination to deployed commands of information becoming available through decompartmentation of certain TK materials.

3. In one way or another, all of these efforts deal with the central nervous system of the US intelligence effort -- and there is serious danger in attempting to deal with them on a piecemeal basis. Unless they are integrated and pull together, the Community will be confronted with technical confusion delays, unnecessary costs of sizeable magnitude and systems that serve only segments of the consumer world.

4. The problem is particularly acute in the developmental electronic information systems. If the many efforts now underway are brought to fruition, the Intelligence Community will be operating numerous separate, secure "real-time" video exchange systems in a few years. Modern computer and electronic display technology, if not applied on a coordinated Community-wide basis, could result in an extensive waste of resources and actually deter efficient and effective operations.

5. The systems have several features in common, but they also have many features which distinguish one from the other. Each system is being designed primarily to display a particular intelligence input or group of related inputs. Each system will have its own file structure, retrieval language and data base management system. Access will be made more difficult by reason of the large variety of classifications and categories. The intelligence analyst will be surrounded by scopes. He will have to be a walking library of retrieval languages. Inefficiency will border on ineffectiveness.

6. The COINS program already is under examination, with ASD(I) assigned Executive Agent responsibilities under IRAC auspices. The primary missing element in the current COINS situation is the lack of a demand by analysts for the kind of assistance which a community on-line intelligence system should provide. In part, this is because the analytical methodologies which might cause the demand are in scarcely more than rudimentary use in the Intelligence Community, and

acceptance is slow. An additional limitation is that COINS files are not always kept current and are difficult to get at through existing operating procedures. Question is being raised in some quarters as to whether the Intelligence Community should cut its losses in COINS (as such) and should get underway with a new study which would yield specifications of capability, costs, schedules, contractor candidates, and the like, and provide basis for determination as to whether and to what degree the Intelligence Community wants to proceed with an up-to-date community on-line intelligence system which would include CIA and State as well as DOD agencies.

7. There is a strong requirement to back off and scope this problem before individual elements of the Community become so heavily committed on a single course of action, or data handling system, that they cannot be persuaded or will be unable to move toward compatibility of systems.

8. A number of approaches are available -- alternatively or in combination -- to bring the situation under control and develop a coordinated Community-wide approach to the information handling problem.

a. Assign the job to the USIB Intelligence Information Handling Committee. The IHC is not now staffed to cope with a problem of the magnitude already apparent, but it has a strong membership of upper middle-level representatives from the agencies and services, most of whom are in direct charge of information handling or communications in their parent organizations. The IHC is well thought of in the Community and the JCS Joint Staff, but the climate to date has been such as to limit it primarily to service as a forum for the exchange of information.

b. Establish a special task force, employ a full-time chairman of established reputation, and either authorize him direct access to the DCI or make him immediately responsive to someone who has direct access to the DCI, such as the DDS&T or the D/DCI/IC.

c. Establish an Information Handling Group as part of the IC Staff, contract for the services of a Group Chief with first-rate expertise in this field, and give him a high-powered staff. This would reflect direct DCI support and give emphasis to the Community aspects which demand attention.

d. Enter into a contract, cost of which would be sizeable, with an established firm competent in computer-based research. Some considerable period of "education" of the contract staff would be involved and the contractor would be apart from the intra-Community management circle.

e. Assign the task to an element of the Intelligence Community which has experience in the development and administration of major programs, and make provision for necessary contract assistance. The CIA/DDS&T, the Director, NSA, and the NRO all have experience in managing in-house/contractor-supported programs as do the military services. Each of these has institutional imperatives, and objections might well be raised by some elements of the Community if the overall task is assigned to any single agency or department.

9. In my view, the essential elements of whatever approach you decide upon should meet the following criteria:

a. The project office should be part of the DCI management structure at a high enough level so that the head of the activity can deal directly with program managers.

b. The activity should be clearly Community-related and not focused primarily on the information handling needs of any particular agency.

c. Staffing of the activity should be drawn from all Community members. If the effort is to be successful, each organization must be made to feel it has a full opportunity to assist in shaping the results. To overcome bureaucratic objections, achievement of a "DCI and the Community" spirit will be of great importance.

d. The undertaking should be broad enough -- and clearly evident as broad enough -- to assure all concerned parties that it is not "intelligence in isolation" from operational, telecommunications, policy and planning realities -- including the needs of military field commands.

e. The project leader should have this responsibility as his full-time assignment, and his staff, including Community representation, also should be devoted full-time to the project.

10. On balance, I recommend that you:

a. Appoint an Intelligence Information Project Officer, responsible directly to you. This project officer should be selected in consultation with the program managers and could come either from within the Intelligence Community, from another government agency, or from private industry. The important factor should be the individual competence and recognized stature of whoever is selected. The appointment should be a full-time one for at least one year, with a possibility of extension.

b. Provide for support of the project officer by a Steering Group including senior representation from CIA, NSA, DIA, the IC Staff, the JCS and the Defense Communications Agency. The critical factor here is to introduce the expertise and ability to cope effectively with all the ramifications of a complex situation much as DDS&T has done in its major projects.

c. Direct the IHC to provide staff support to the project officer and his Steering Group. Since this will require augmentation of the IHC Staff, arrange with program managers to provide personnel augmentation to the IHC Staff to cope with the workload which will be involved.

d. Authorize the project officer to employ contract research assistance, as appropriate, subject to guidance from the Steering Group, and your approval.

e. Direct the project officer to develop:

(1) A Community-wide information flow analysis, indicating the current situation and what the Community would like it to be, with appropriate recommendations to bring this latter about.

(2) A study documenting the current status of efforts underway with respect to electronic information display systems and their costs, and recommending specifically how to funnel the present diverse activities into a coherent system for the benefit of the Intelligence Community and its consumers as a whole -- both in and out of Washington.

(3) An adequate coordination/management arrangement which, upon approval of the recommendations called for in (2) above, will assure implementation of a single coherent intelligence system which interfaces as appropriate with consumer systems (such as the military command and control arrangements).

(4) An overall plan for coping with information handling problems which recognizes that even though the "real-time" video exchange problem is of major significance, it is still only part of a needed overall Community plan for dealing effectively with the inter-agency/inter-departmental flow and handling of information.

11. I further recommend that:

a. Coincident with your decision to proceed with this project, you advise the USIB and IRAC of your personal commitment to the success of this effort, and request that all intelligence organizations desist temporarily from further contracting or procurement in the intelligence information handling field without prior clearance from you. This will pose problems because some time-sensitive procurement actions must be dealt with expeditiously, and getting your project effort underway will require a bit of time, but it is important that the situation not be further complicated by additional moves on the part of agencies currently involved in developing new systems.

b. You discuss the project personally with Dr. Hall because of its impact on ASD(I) actions with respect to

COINS, and invite his support to the effort you are getting underway on a unified approach to present activities and proposed initiatives.

Daniel O. Graham
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D/DCI/IC

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